AN EPISTLE OF Tender Caution and Advice TO FRIENDS ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS!

MY Mind hath been many Times bowed, not only on my own Account, but in a very close Manner for the Welfare of your poor never-dying Souls; and seldom of late have I been enabled to cry to the Lord for my own Preservation, but have had strong Desires for yours also, being sensible we all have great Need always to be watchful over our Thoughts, Words and Actions. And, dear Friends! (to whom I am nearly united) my Mind hath been humbled, when I have thought of you, lest the Enemy should ensnare you in any Degree; and sometimes

ſometimes have been under a Concern to write to you, but was diſcouraged, on Conſideration of the Advice from time to time given, which many ſeem to ſhut their Ears againſt and put afar off; and I am afraid, ſome are ready to ſay, *This belongs not to me, I am not the worſt in many Things, I may go on a little longer, and when I am old, I will return.* But, oh! have a Care of thinking after this manner; for I tell you, Delays of that Nature are very *dangerous.* I remember, when but a Child, I was often drawn into many childiſh Actions, and many Times brought into much Trouble becauſe of them, then I thought I would do ſo no more; but when I was a little eaſed, I was ready to get into my old Way again, and ſo from one Time to another ſhunning the *Croſs*, till at laſt I thought, if I went on in that Courſe, I ſhould not be able to return. Then did I make Covenant with the Lord, that I would never do as I had done, if he would be pleaſed to enable me with Strength to reſiſt, being ſenſible of my own Weakneſs and Inability, without his divine Help. And, to his Praiſe and your Encouragement, I have to ſay, he hath not been awanting on his Part to this Day. May you therefore chuſe him for your Portion! then will it become your greateſt Concern to pleaſe him, and you will not be too thoughtful about this World, or the Things thereof; but your Breathings and Prayers to him will be, firſt on your own Account, and then one for another, That he would be pleaſed, in his great and condeſcending Love, to enable you ſo to live here, that, when Time to you in this World muſt be no more, you may be found worthy to have an Admittance into his Kingdom. *But if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear!* This Paſſage hath many Times been brought into my View, with Deſires, that none might be of the latter Number; for I have found it a Matter of deep Affliction to be unprepared to meet the Meſ-

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ſenger of Death when it may come, otherwiſe I had not ſet Pen to Paper on this Occaſion. But I believe, dear Friends, when ſuch a Time comes, none of us will have to ſay, I have been too careful, or done too much for the Lord; for all we can do is little enough.

I had not expoſed myſelf in this Manner, if I could have had Peace, having put off from Time to Time, till I found it lay very heavy upon me, and believing it my Duty, I durſt not delay any longer; for one Day, as I was ſitting alone, with my Mind retired in much Stillneſs, I was ſuddenly ſeized with an uncommon Sickneſs, inſomuch that I expected my Time might not be long, not knowing whether ever I might ſee any of my Relations or Friends any more: But this was not all, for a Fear poſſeſs'd my Mind, *If I ſhould then be taken away, I ſhould not go well.* Then did I cry ſecretly to the Lord, that he would be pleaſed to ſhew me the Cauſe, and wherein I had miſſed my Way. The Return was, *The Youth are ungathered, and ſhould be required at my Hands, becauſe I had not warned them, when it was clearly manifeſted to me, I ſhould, by writing to them.* Then did I not think any Thing in this World too dear to part with, if I might be inſtrumental in helping any poor Child on the Way *Sion-ward.* Oh you young Ones! for whom my Soul hath mourned many Times, I cannot but call unto you, to give up your blooming Years to ſerve the Lord. Be not entangled with the fading Pleaſures of this World, they will yield you no ſolid Satisfaction, I can tell you by Experience, for I have had too great a Share of them; but found they would not help me on the right Way: And I ſtill find as much Need as ever to keep a ſteady Watch, leaſt I ſhould in any Degree unlawfully join myſelf to them. Oh! dear Hearts, beware of a *light and airy Converſation*, many having been hurt thereby; for by it we may not only hurt ourſelves, but one another. I remember when I was about

about ſixteen Years of Age, I was with one whom I did believe to be in a good State, and we were too light in our Converſation; but I thought, if ſuch an one did ſo, there could be no Harm in it; and therefore I may ſay, ſuch like Things got Room in me, but afterwards I was troubled; and having thus miſſed my Way, I deſire you may take Warning. Oh! haſten home to the Work in your own Boſoms whilſt you are young, and then if Trials and Exerciſes be ſuffered to come upon you, I doubt not, but ſufficient Strength will be given to ſupport and carry you through. Therefore, you that may meet with Troubles and Afflictions, either on your own Account or others, be not diſcouraged, the Lord is able to deliver out of them all. Do not look back, for there is great Need for thoſe that are able, to put their Shoulders to the Work, and help it forwards as much as they can; for I am afraid too many draw back. Alas! the Fault is their own, they cannot plead Excuſe for their ſo doing, becauſe I believe the Lord hath enlightned every one's Underſtanding, ſo that they may ſee what they ſhould do, and what they ſhould leave undone, if there was but a diligent Attention upon him: But, Oh! it is Cauſe of Mourning, to behold ſo much Indifferency prevailing over many; may the Lord, in the Riches of his Love, ſtir up ſuch to Diligence, and let them ſee the Danger they are running themſelves into, and alſo enable them to reſiſt the Enemy in all this Appearances! Then might we travel on jointly together, and be a Help and Encouragement one to another. But, Alas! inſtead of a joint Labour and Exerciſe, ſome can go to Meetings, and there ſit down at Eaſe and *fall a-ſleep:* I have thought ſuch came far ſhort of what they profeſs, and are offenſive to him whom they pretend to worſhip; I wiſh all in this Condition might be brought to ſee clearly what they are doing, and would conſider the bad Conſequences that will attend ſuch Neglect.

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Let us bring the Matter a little home: How would it ſeem unto us, if we were to go into any Place where a Number of People are aſſembled, pretending to be under the Exerciſe of Worſhip to Almighty God, and at the ſame Time find many, or ſeveral of them, *ſleeping* and *ſlumbering* away their pretious Moments? Should we not conclude, ſuch are not in the right Way, nor what they pretend to be? Yes ſurely, my Friends. Then may not others draw the ſame Concluſion, when they come into our Meetings, take a View, and inſtead of finding us under a religious and reverent Exerciſe and Travel of Soul before the Lord, that we may be enabled by his divine Aſſiſtance, to worſhip him acceptably, they ſee divers ſitting in a *dull, heavy, ſleepy Condition*, when at the ſame Time, very likely, they expected to have found better Things amongſt us. Surely this would be a very great Diſappointment to the honeſt Enquirer after the Way of Life and Salvation, who knoweth not where to find Reſt for his poor Soul. May we, under the Conſideration of theſe Things, be ſtirred up to more Diligence, both in this and many other Reſpects, which we may often ſee amiſs amongſt us. Well! may we not only ſee them, but be enabled through the Lord's Power, to come up in the Performance of our ſeveral Duties! But I can tell you, my dear Friends, when at Times I have taken a View of the Church's preſent State, and ſeen ſo much Indifferency prevailing in many of her profeſſed Members, it hath made me ready to ſay, *Oh, that mine Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears*, or that I was in ſome ſolitary Place, where I might ſit down and there mourn for the Unfaithful and the Backſliders amongſt us: When I have ſeen that the Enemy is laying his Snares almoſt before every Step we take, and how often we are catched thereby, I thought, ſurely we have great Need to be always upon our *Watch*, being no longer ſafe than whilſt we are ſo.

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But, oh! dear Friends, when I have been at a Meeting, and ſeen ſo much *Drouſineſs* prevailing, I have thought Friends are not watchful enough, nor ſo careful as they ought to be, otherwiſe ſuch Things would not ſo much appear; and under the Conſideration of theſe Things, I have come away with Oppreſſion of Mind, deſiring that ſome might again be raiſed up to Adviſe to more Diligence. But, alas! if they will not follow the great *Director*, neither will they regard the Directions of Men. Dear Hearts! may we be careful when we ſee others ſlip, to take more heed to our Steps, in order that we may walk agreeable to the Truth we profeſs!

Be careful in all your Converſation among Men, to avoid *looſe* and *idle Words*, and *Lightneſs* in your *Behaviour*, ſuch Things are diſagreeable to the Truth; ſhun *vain Company*; dally not with the *vain World*, nor the Spirit of it, by which many poor Souls have been drawn into *Marriages* with People of other Perſwaſions, and into other Evils, whereby they have wounded their own Souls, and brought Grief and Affliction on their Friends. Oh my Friends! may the Miſconduct of others be your Caution, ſo that you may be more circumſpect, and not ſuffer your Minds to hanker after ſuch Things, leſt you be tempted to join therewith, which will not only leſſen your Characters amongſt Men, but alſo give Liberty for many Evils to creep in, very much Scandal having been brought upon the Truth, by ſuch as have joined with the *Cuſtoms*, *Faſhions* and *Fellowſhip* of the World.

And, dear young Friends, be careful to keep your Garments clean from the Spots of the World; I ſay, dally not with the Vanities thereof, they may do Harm, but can do no Good; have a Care of that evil Seed of *Pride*, which, I fear, is taking Root, and, if not weeded out in Time, will choak the good Seed

which

which the Lord hath ſown, and, I do believe, will ſow in a plentiful Manner amongſt you. Oh! be very tender over it, and trifle not away your blooming Years; for the Lord may as ſoon call us that are young, as the oldeſt; and when he calls, we muſt obey, whether prepared or not. And dear Hearts! when ſuch a Time comes, that the Body muſt be laid in the Duſt, what will the *Reward* of *Pride* be?

I wiſh all may duly conſider, that a trying Time will come, and how ſoon none of us know; therefore, it is needful that we be concerned above all Things, that our Peace be made with the Lord, leſt ſuch a Time come upon any at unawares. I believe, they that have been the moſt careful, have had nothing to ſpare, or once thought they had done too much; but have had to rejoice, in that they witneſſed the Lord to own them at ſuch a Time, and could declare to their Relations and Friends, the ſolid Satisfaction and Peace they have enjoyed, hoping that, if their Day was over, their Day's Work was done, having nothing to do, but to die. This is a Comfort indeed to their near Relations and Friends: Sometimes the Huſband that hath had to part with his dear Wife, or the Wife with her loving Huſband, or with their tender Children, have been comforted to hear ſuch a Teſtimony from one about to take his, or her laſt Farewel of this World.

Oh dear young Ones! if you *Marry*, be concerned that it may be in the Wiſdom of Truth; there is Need for Huſband and Wife, not only to be joined in Words but in Heart alſo. It muſt be a very hard Thing when two go together, one having the Cauſe of Truth at Heart, and the other a Stranger to it; much more for two that are of different Perſwaſions in Matters of Religion, to join in that great and weighty Affair. Oh! may you all duly conſider and look

look narrowly into this State, with earneſt Breathings and ſecret Cries to the Almighty, that you may ſee and diſcern for yourſelves, and be rightly directed in your Choice! then will it be of more Advantage to you than I am able to ſet forth; nor is it, I think, in my Power fully to deſcribe the Difference between thoſe who are jointly concerned for one another's Welfare in the Truth, and ſuch as are at Eaſe; or where one is concerned, and the other rather draws back. Surely this muſt be Cauſe of Trouble to ſuch a poor Soul, when under a religious Exerciſe.

But where two are joined in the Fear of the Lord, and live in the ſame, they can rejoice together, and, if Trials and Exerciſes be permitted to come upon them, they can ſympathize with each other, the Stronger helping to encourage the Weak. Theſe are true Help-meets one unto the other. Oh! may he that is able and alſo willing, direct you, both in this and all other Concerns, that when Time to you in this World muſt be no more, you may finiſh your Courſe with Joy, and be admitted into the Kingdom of everlaſting Peace, is the Deſire of my Mind.

From one who travels for the Proſperity of *Sion*, and that the Inhabitants may more and more learn Righteouſneſs.

A. ROBINSON.

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